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MEMORANDUM

To: Heads of Fire Departments

From: Stephen D. Coan
State Fire Marshal

Date: January 18, 2008

Subject: Reporting Firefighter Deaths and Injuries to MFIRS

Under M.G.L. Chapter 148 Section 2 you are required to report any deaths or injuries that occur during a fire or explosion. This includes any deaths or injuries to your personnel. Reducing fire service deaths and injuries is an important goal of the Department of Fire Services. We'd like to be able to keep an accurate count of all fire service deaths and injuries that occur in the Commonwealth. It is also our intention to use the information from these reports to design programs and educational materials aimed at preventing and decreasing the number of deaths and injuries to fire service personnel.

To help us reach this goal, I am requesting that you report any death, injury or illness to someone on your department through the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS).

The current version of MFIRS can support fire service deaths and injuries attached to any type of incident, not just fires and explosions. If the death, injury or illness does not take place during an incident but rather during a training evolution or just around the fire station, you would create an EMS incident (Incident Type = 311 – Medical Assist, if your department does not run its own ambulance; or Incident Type = 321 – EMS call, if your department does run its own ambulance) and attach a Fire Service Casualty Module to it. You should even report exposure to toxic substances or harmful physical agents through any route of entry into the body, regardless of the presence of clinical signs or symptoms. There is also no time limit to update a fatality from a previously documented injury or illness.

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The U.S. Department of Justice's definition of a line of duty death (or injury) is any death, illness or injury that occurs to a member of a fire department in a city, town or district that is 'on-duty' or duty-related. 'On-duty' or duty-related means that the death, injury or illness occurred enroute to, at an or coming from an incident; during a work shift; during a training evolution; and heading to the station or scene of an incident after being appropriately 'toned out' or called to a genuine incident by the appropriate authority (for call or volunteer fire service personnel).

Also the federal Hometown Heroes Act establishes a statutory presumption that the public safety officers who die from a heart attack or stroke following nonroutine stressful or strenuous physical public safety activity or training, died in the line of duty. If a member of your department dies from a heart attack or stroke associated with a particular call within 24 hours of that call or the end of his or her shift, a Fire Service Casualty Module can be completed and attached to that particular incident.

If you have any questions about reporting these casualties, please contact Derryl Dion, the Research Analyst and MFIRS Manager at (978) 567-3382 or Derryl.Dion@state.ma.us.

SDC/jlm/djd